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## THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

17 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Warning Working Group

SUBJECT : Minutes

1. The Warning Working Group met at CIA Headquarters on 12 February, 1981. In attendance were:

Dick Lehman, NIO/W - Chairman

[redacted] DIA  
[redacted] DIA

[redacted] NSA

Pete Oleson, DUSD/PR

Bob Martin, State/INR

Dick Kerr, CIA

[redacted] RMS

[redacted] CTS

[redacted] CTS

[redacted], A/NIO/W [redacted]

2. [redacted] RMS, presented a briefing on his plans to conduct a study of Washington area operations/alert/warning centers. His purposes would be to identify FY83-87 abilities to utilize the information derived from new collection systems and to review agency plans to upgrade personnel and equipment. A lively discussion ensued. The concensus was that there was ample material available in studies already completed, and that [redacted] would be better advised to review existing material than to conduct a new study. The Chairman agreed to convey the WWG's recommendation to [redacted]. The Group agreed to provide [redacted] additional guidance if required after his review of existing studies is completed. [redacted]

3. The Chairman distributed three papers on the future of the Strategic Warning Staff. They will be discussed at the 26 February meeting. [redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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4. The Chairman described his recent meeting on warning with the new DCI and announced he would meet with the new DDCI tomorrow re. his warning responsibilities. [ ]

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5. [ ] announced that RMS and CTS will be consolidated. The supplanting organization will be decided on in two weeks or so. Emphasis will be on planning and product evaluation. [ ]

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7. Mr. Oleson recommended the Group be briefed from time to time on innovative technical developments related to warning. The Chairman accepted the recommendation, stating he could do more along those lines if his staff is augmented. [ ]

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8. At attachment are a paper on the Alert Memoranda Track Record and a background paper on the Community's warning capabilities. [ ]

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9. Our next meeting is scheduled for 1315 on Thursday, 26 February. We will meet in the NMIC conference room at DIA rather than CIA Hq. as previously announced (see Para 6 above). [ ]

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Richard Lehman  
National Intelligence Officer  
for Warning

Attachments:  
As stated

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## Distribution:

Copy 1 - Peter C. Oleson, OSD/DoD  
2 - [redacted] NSA  
3 - Robert A. Martin, State/INR  
4 - [redacted] D/SWS  
5 - [redacted] AD/JCS  
6 - [redacted] JSW-1-DIA  
7 - [redacted] RMS  
8 - Richard J. Kerr, D/OCO  
9 - [redacted], CTS  
10 - SA/CI  
11 - NIO/W  
12 - A/NIO/W  
13 - WWG File ✓  
14 - NFAC Registry

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## ALERT MEMORANDA - THE TRACK RECORD

The Alert Memorandum is an interagency publication issued by the Director of Central Intelligence on behalf of the Intelligence Community. It warns explicitly of impending potential developments abroad that may have serious implications for US interests.

The Alert Memorandum was an active vehicle between 1974 and 1976, after which it fell into disuse. When the National Intelligence Officer for Warning was appointed in October, 1978, the Director of Central Intelligence revived Alert Memoranda. Since then, thirty one have been issued.

The decision to publish an Alert Memorandum is reserved by the Director of Central Intelligence. In theory, anyone in the policy or intelligence communities may request one. In practice, the National Intelligence Officer for Warning usually has taken the initiative.

An Alert Memorandum is not predictive. Rather, it explores reasonable possibilities which, if they come to pass, would have serious implications for US policy. In fact, the greater the potentially adverse effect on US policy, the lower the threshold for issuance of an Alert Memorandum.

It is axiomatic that the amount of lead time is inversely proportional to the confidence of the judgment. There has been a constant, and probably healthy, struggle between the warners, who wish

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to act earlier, and the analysts, who like to wait for more evidence in order to increase their confidence. There is also the problem of false alarms, "crying wolf" in the venacular. One obviously does not want to devalue the currency by flooding the market with warnings. In the final analysis, there is no rule of thumb. Each budding crisis has been judged on its own merits, and the decision of whether or not to issue an Alert Memorandum has been unique to the problem at hand.

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This memorandum is intended to provide information on the Intelligence Community's capabilities in the area of warning intelligence. For our purposes, warning is defined as "those measures taken, and the intelligence information produced, by the Intelligence Community to avoid surprise to the President, the National Security Council, and the Armed Forces by foreign events of major importance to the security of the United States." It includes, but is not limited to, strategic warning, ie: the threat of the initiation of hostilities against the US or our military forces. [redacted]

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There exists a well structured national warning system under the leadership of the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence. The chief operating officer is the National Intelligence Officer for Warning. He, in turn, is supported by the regional National Intelligence Officers who are broadly responsible for the production of warning intelligence in respective geographic areas. For specifically military warning, the Defense Department operates an elaborate worldwide network of watch centers manned around the clock. CIA also has capabilities in the military field. [redacted]

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The principal warning document at the national level is the Alert Memorandum. It is issued by the DCI on behalf of the Community. It is not necessarily predictive, but is designed to warn of potential developments abroad which, if they occur, may have serious implications for US interests. In the last two years, [redacted] Alert Memoranda have been produced. [redacted]

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In summary, we are confident we can give ample warning of large scale military preparations, but not so sanguine about judging high-level political decisions. [redacted]

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